

COOKING WITH **FLOUR**

HEALTHY EATING WITH FLOUR RECIPES



HEALTHY COOKING SERIES

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Healthy Cooking Series

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Mendon Cottage Books



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Introduction

A couple of months ago I wrote a natural health series book on cooking with wheat berries. Here is an introduction to one of the basic natural ingredients which is used extensively in cooking, but we overlook it so often, because we are so used to it.

Just imagine a life without bread, pastries, cakes, doughnuts, waffles, muffins, griddle cakes and other such delicious items. If we enjoy baking, the first ingredient which we are going to collect in our recipe list is going to be flour.

Nobody knows when cereals and grasses began to be used as flour, by mankind. Until then, he used to make his bread by making up a pounded paste of roots, bark and seeds, flattening it, and then cooking it on hot stones. As his tastes began to grow more and more sophisticated he found out that it was very easy to grow and then harvest cereals, and then grind them into a powder. This is the powder, which we hold so precious and, which we call Flour.

Many of the ingredients that we see now in baking recipes call for all-purpose flour. This is made from hard spring wheat. It is high in protein and it is normally used to replace highly refined pastry flour

Pastry flour is made from soft wheat and it gives a lighter texture to fragile baked products like small cakes, biscuits and pastries.

A Baker normally chooses the all-purpose flour for yeast dough, sauce thickening and strudels. In the same manner, cake flour is also a different type of flour. It is a soft wheat flour and is of very fine grain. It is velvety soft, when you handle it. It is perfectly white. However its protein value is very low.

But millenniums ago, people did not know much about all-purpose flours. They just knew that they could use buckwheat, rice, soybean, rye, potato, split peas, lentils, maize and cornmeal as the basis of a large number of flours. So, depending on the place where you live, you are going to get either refined white flour or whole wheat flour.

Self-Raising White Flour

This is the flour, which is normally used when there is no question of adding yeast. This is available in the market with salt and raising agents already added to it. This white flour has uncountable general uses and you can make it very easily by converting plain flour to self-raising.

Here is the traditional method of self-raising white flour. Take 28 cupfuls of ordinary white flour. This is going to be 7 pounds. To this, you are going to add 1 pound of baking powder, and 1 ounce of salt.

All-Purpose Flour

All-purpose flour is normally used by those people, who want a self-rising flour religious predictable and easy to handle. This is normally used in making light cakes and pastries. However, plain flour is the preferred flour used for puddings, Madeira cake, sponge cake, batters, quick breads, and yeast doughs.

How to Make Your Own Baking Powder

This is the traditional way in which traditional bakers made their baking powder. They mix 3 ounces of Tartaric acid powder with 4 ounces of bicarbonate of soda. This was then placed in dry containers and stored in a dry storage place. I found this recipe modified in the East, where our Baker, – who does not bother about mass-produced baking powder, and made his own with bicarbonate of soda and tartaric acid, – added 4 ounces of ground rice flour. He said this absorbed moisture and save the mixture from becoming lumpy.

There is another traditional alternating method in which you can make baking powder. This is to combine cream of tartar with half its weight of white carbonate of soda with or without their combined weight of ground rice. This is perhaps the better of the two methods I have given you as in certain combinations, the first may give a slight hint of bitterness, especially because of the tartaric acid.

If you look in the market and are confused by a baking powder box which says double action baking powder, well, here is the difference between single action baking powder and double acting baking powder

Single action baking powder normally uses tartaric acid or cream of tartar – tartrate baking powder. If it uses calcium phosphate, it is going to be a phosphate baking powder

A double acting baking powder is going to have 2 acid ingredients. It is called double acting, because part of rising or leavening action is going to take place with the cold, moist ingredients and the rest is going to take place when the dough is in the oven.

Knowing More about Graham Flour

Graham flour is normally used in Canada for making yeast rolls and loafs, quick breads, and also cakes. This is nothing but whole wheat flour from which the wheat kernel and the wheat bran has not been removed. This was a very popular and healthy wheat flour eaten extensively in Canada in the 60s, and in the US, it is now marketed as a coarsely ground whole wheat flour, which is stone – ground.

Funnily enough, I have never come across many cookery recipes in the West, calling for Graham flour. That is because a substitute is used by using 1 cup of whole wheat flour and 1 cup of bran.

Graham flour is not white flour – it is brownish in color, because it has not been refined, and the bran has not been removed. Normally, Graham flours, which are made for making quick breads loaves and rolls are mixed with white flour so as to get the best of both worlds.

The whole wheat flour is going to provide all the protein. The bran content is going to give you a natural| but it is going to leave less room for gluten, which makes for lightness in the bread. That is why the white flour, which is rich in gluten is mixed with the brown flour to avoid a heavy loaf.

Rye Flour

Rye flour has been in use for millenniums, especially in the Middle Eastern countries and in African countries to give a really weighty bread the early evening agent is going to find small quantities of gluten to work with. That is why the rye loaves are apt to be shape – less. They are also going to be heavy textured and dark in color.

In mixtures, where you are using white, wheat flour with Rye flour keep the proportion of Rye flour to less than half or you are going to get a sticky and hard to handle dough.

Cornmeal and Maize Flour

This is used fairly extensively in North America, as breakfast cereals. The Native Americans considered corn to be so precious that they made a ceremonial gesture of honoring great men among them with a bowing gesture and a hand action, as if corn seed was being sown before them. There could be no greater way of showing respect and reverence by these people.

The native Americans gave the first European settlers corn seed, and taught them how to grow it, and harvest it. That is why the original Thanksgiving feasts held in America in the 17th century always had the Native Americans as honored guests sharing in the feast.[\[1\]](#)

This corn is now used extensively to make muffins, waffles and other con base breads. In Europe, corn is grown extensively in Romania, Hungary and the Balkan countries. Both yellow and white cornmeal is essential for North American soda bread which is traditional in character.

Pea flour

This is a fritter or batter flour, normally used as a covering of vegetables or pieces of meat, before frying in the East. This is made up of split pea. The traditional method of making this flour is by warming the split peas in thick skillets, turning and shaking constantly and when they are golden brown in color, they are allowed to cool.

They are then pulverized in a pestle or ground in some form of grinder or small mill. Then they are tightly covered, for storage. This split pea flour is called besin or besan.



The globally known samosas and pakoras have a covering of pea flour. They are extremely popular streetside food in markets, eaten hot from the Wok with a sour chutney or tomato ketchup.

Other popular flours, used in the Indian sub-continent is the ordinary unrefined whole wheat flour. It is going to have wheat bran in it. It is called “Atta”. Refined wheat flour, can be called an equivalent to Western baking flour. It is called “Maida.”

Any sort of cereal can be turned into a flour that she does not matter whether it is a grain, a grass or a Lentil. If it can be powdered and ground, it can be made into a dough, a batter or a coating to bake and fry. So it does not matter whether you are living in Paraburdoo, Kalamazoo or in Timbuktu; if you have food on your table, at least some part of it is going to be made with the use of flour in some form or the other.

Knowing More about Kneading and Sifting

Kneading bread is such a commonplace activity, that many people take it for granted that any recipe calling for kneading flour automatically assumes that one knows how to knead dough. But that is an acquired skill. Look at the [Appendix](#) so that you get to know how to knead bread.

Along with kneading, sifting is an equally important process. This should never be neglected. If you are baking something, you may want to sift salt, baking powder, as well as flour together. Sift it three or four times, so that everything is mixed properly.

So the sifting process may remove some wheat bran and your immediate thought is – I measured out 1 cup of flour, and then I sifted it. It should have been less, but the end product looks like it is more than 1 cup. So what do I do?

Easy – fill a cup full of unsifted flour into a measuring cup and mark the height. Then remove it and sift it back into the measuring cup and see how much higher the sifted flour is in the vessel. Surprise, it is higher even though it is basically 1 cup. That is because sifting introduces air into the flour and air means lightness.

Enriched Flour

Enriched flour is very common on both sides of the Atlantic, which is a comparatively modern innovation. Our grandparents did not know about it. Instead, they ate healthy flour, which was not refined, and which did not have the wheat bran removed from it.

The enhancing of the food value of this basic food is supposed to be one of the greatest single improvement of food history. Well, you could say that it was the best thing after sliced bread. Essentially, enriched flours are all-purpose flours which have vitamins and minerals like iron, riboflavin and Thiamine added to it.

However, this flour has been refined and the natural goodness of wheat kernel and wheat bran has been removed from it. So do you consider enriched flour to be a better health supplement than natural honest-to-goodness natural flour?

Corn Flour – Cornstarch

What is corn flour? What, for that matter is corn? How is it different from maize and mealies? The word is going to change in meaning considerably as you move around the world. In England, it means corn, in the New World, it may be called maize.

Cornflour is usually defined as finely ground maize or Indian corn. The French call it *fecule*, which translates literally as starch. You can consider this to be a blend of starches. Cornflour does not have protein and gluten, and that is why it is a good thickener. All of the starch globules are going to swell and burst under heat. This expansion is the beginning of a physical thickening of sauces and custards.

Cornstarch is just the transatlantic term for ordinary refined corn flour. Corn flour, whether used as a thickener or as a main ingredient in a dish behaves very differently from ordinary flour. As a thickener a little of it is going to go a long way. As a principal ingredient of a mixture, it is going to call for thorough cooking, if it is not to have a raw taste.

Overcooking and under cooking of corn flour may cause thinning of the sauce or of the gravy to which it has been added.

Cake Flours

Cake flours are usually used for extremely soft textured and large cakes, especially in North America. These flours are higher ratio flours. That means that they have been treated in such a way that they are capable of absorbing milk, sugars, fat and water in considerable bulk.

You are not going to get them in your supermarket shelves labeled as a simple flour

The nearest equivalent is of course going to be the amount of gluten in any flour with the dictates the amount of liquid, which can be absorbed properly and safely and quickly.

Introducing Gluten

The higher the gluten content, the more is the quantity of water absorbed by the dough. It is the gluten which is considered to be the air – catcher, and shaper of the final loaf.

Gluten is elastic when he did, and is going to swell and rise into a network of thinly walled cells, which is going to shape the cooking dough into its final form.

This gluten network reticulation is also useful for preventing fruits from falling to the bottom of the cake as it cooks.

Very starchy flours are poor in gluten. Starch reduced flours are the one which produce baked products like rolls.

The more starch content of flour has, the more easy it is going to be for it to combine with fat to make a friable batter.

Improvers in the shape of malt flours are sometimes added to ordinary flours of good gluten content.

How to Differentiate between a Good and Bad Batch of Bread

This is going to depend on a number of factors. Even professionals of long experience can sometimes turn out bad batches of bread. This happens by inexpert handling of the dough in such a way that the destined working of the gluten cannot be carried out properly.

For instance, over wetness, over salted ness, too much sweet or too much acid, over and under kneading and under and over mixing are just some of the disastrous fact, there is which can have a sorry effect on the final baked product.

Bread flours should have a high gluten ratio. They should also be allowed to leaven and rise for a couple of hours, after they have been kneaded into dough.

Soft wheat flours – the ones with more starch and thus more fat absorbing capacity – are the flours which you are going to use for cakes and pastries and less you want a puff pastry or flaky effect.

Whole meal Flours

With so many excellent whole meal flours available in the market today is it a surprise that so many of us are confused on **which flour** is the best of all, to be used in cooking?

For this we need to read the analysis on a packet, this we decide to buy it. Sometimes you may just read that the flour in the packet is ground wheat with absolutely no additions or subtractions. Sometimes you will need to make sure that you have a whole meal or wheat germ flour, which is a brown flour of some degree of whole – ness and with extra wheat germ added.

Look at the small print. Whole meal flour is either stoneground or it is roller milled. Stoneground flour is more expensive. That is because all the nourishment and all of the wheat germ is present. But it has this quality in common with wheat meal and wheat germ flours. A good diet needs bran and wheat germ so you need to choose the best flour with these items in large quantities.

Mixing of the Fat and Liquid



Mixing of the fat in the flour, especially as you are kneading it in the making of dough is an important procedure. You can either melt the fat beforehand or crumble it into small pieces before you added to the flour with water.

When fat is used with the flour, in cooking, as in the making of roux as a sauce basis, the flour is thoroughly blended with melted fat and introduced only gradually to the stock. As the fat melts in the heating liquid stirring insures that each melted portion releases just so much starts for absorption in the liquid. That is why it is necessary to keep stirring.

Even the most amateurish of cooks know that flour added suddenly to any sort of hot liquid is going to form lumps and glutinous clots as the particles adhere. That is why they should be separated before introduction to eat by a mixture with cold milk or water beforehand.

In the same way, if any particular type of shortening is recommended in your recipe, you should be careful about trying a handy alternative fat or butter, Margarine or any other solid vegetable shortening. This is because these are going to vary considerably in water content.

If a frying medium is specified for flour coated or flour containing items, use the fat mentioned. That is because there is a lot of difference in the smoking temperatures.

The smoking temperature of lard is low – the smoking temperature of vegetable fats is comparatively high. If you try your own experimentation and substitute you may end up with a texture or a product, which is odd and unhopod for!

Making Dough Wrappings

These dough wrappings are very popular in China, and are traditionally known as wun tun. You normally get them packaged as won ton skins. You can make this recipe by rolling the dough paperthin and cutting into 2 ½ inch thick squares.

2 cups all-purpose flour, ¼ teaspoonful of salt, two eggs, two – three tablespoonful of water, corn flour.

Sift the flour and the salt into a mound on your pastry board. Make a depression in the center of it, and drop the eggs in.

Stir, adding just enough of water to mix to a stiff dough. Knead until the dough is very elastic. The more you knead the better is going to be the result.

Cut in half and cover with a damp cloth. Leave for 20 minutes.

Dust the pastry board well with Cornflour. Place one half dough on the board, dust with Corn flour, and rollout as thin as possible, dusting with Cornflour during the rolling process.

Cut into 2 ½ in.² And pile on top of each other. Cover with their damp cloth and keep repeating with the second half of the dough. Keep these wrappings covered with a cloth until they are ready for use.

Filled Wontons



For the filling, you need one cup of minced chicken, one green onion, chopped, one teaspoonful of chopped parsley, half a teaspoonful of chopped ginger root, half a teaspoonful of sugar and 1 teaspoon full of Cornflour. Also, you need one tablespoonful of soy sauce, one fourth teaspoonful of salt, two hefty pinches of pepper, 30 – 40 wontons squares, and one egg white, lightly beaten.

Combine the chicken, onion, parsley, ginger, all finely minced, with sugar, corn flour, soy sauce, salt and pepper. Allow to mix for 30 minutes.

Place one of the wonton skins in front of you with one corner pointing in your direction. Put less than a quarter of a teaspoonful of filling, about a quarter of an inch away from the corner.

Put a little bit of egg white on the corner. Now fold the corner over twice with the filling inside. Then take the two side corners and fold towards the rolled corners until they meet.

Dab the corners with the egg whites and pinch the two edges/ends together. These are now ready to be fried.

Fried Wontons

For these you need 30 – 40 filled wontons and 4 cups of good vegetable oil. Heat the oil in a wok to 375°F. Deep fry the wontons, a few at a time until they are golden brown. Drain and serve.

Baps



This is a floury breakfast roll, normally eaten in Scotland like Bannocks. This should be eaten warm from the oven, with honey or with marmalade or jam

For this you need one packet yeast, one teaspoonful of sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of lukewarm water, 5 cups of plain flour, one teaspoonful of salt, 4 tablespoons full of lard, half a cup of lukewarm water – extra –, and half a cup of lukewarm milk

Dissolve the yeast in sugar and water. Allow it to stand for 10 minutes.

Sift the flour and the salt in a bowl. Add the lard and with the fingertips, work into the flour until it is fine and crumbly. Add the water and the milk and the yeast mixture to this flour and stir to make a soft dough.

Cover and allow to rise for at least one hour in a warm place.

Turn out and knead lightly on floured board. Divided into 16 pieces of equal size and form into oval shapes about 3 inches long.

Place on a greased and floured baking sheet, brush with milk and dust with flour.

Set in a warm place to rise for another half hour. Dust again with flour. With the finger press a slight dent into the center of each bap before placing it in the oven to prevent blisters from forming.

Bake at 400°F for 18 minutes. Serve warm from the oven with jam, honey and marmalade.

Appendix

Perfect Bread Tips

You can use Baker's flour, which absorbs more heat we then will rise more. Plain flour has been used for centuries, but do not use refined flour. This refined flour has been processed in such a manner that it is going to become a solid glutinous mass sticking to the innards of your stomach and intestines because it has no fiber content.

Yeast must be really fresh. Traditionally, the yeast from last week or yesterday's baking is going to be used, but if you are starting for the first time, use baker's yeast bought from your nearest baker. If you are using dried yeast, it is going to keep well, if it is hermetically sealed, but it should not smell musty.

Fresh yeast should be a creamy – putty color and should crumble easily.

This yeast keeps in fridge up to three weeks, and in the freezer for up to two months.

Have the ingredients and utensils warm – if your kitchen is cold – to speed up the “proving” process. You can place the dough in a warm place near your stove to help with the yeast “proving”.

Be careful not to over prove or overripe dough. This gives the yeast a chance to give the bread a yeasty flavor and smell. The texture is also going to be coarse and chewy, unless of course you like yeasty bread.

Kneading Bread



Here is the way in which you are going to learn how to knead dough. That is practice for making basic bread.

Get the ingredients together.

You do not normally use eggs, even though they are being used as a binding material. I normally use butter for binding.

Eggs can be used for glazing the crusty surface.

The traditional way of making a good dough is to sieve **3 pounds of flour with no more than 1 ounce of salt into a large bowl. Rub in 1 – 2 ounces of butter or lard.** Traditionally lard was used, but butter helps keep the bread crunchy and delicious tasting longer.



Warm one and a half pints of water to hand heat. That means it should be lukewarm, and your hand should not feel any discomfort when you dip it in the water.

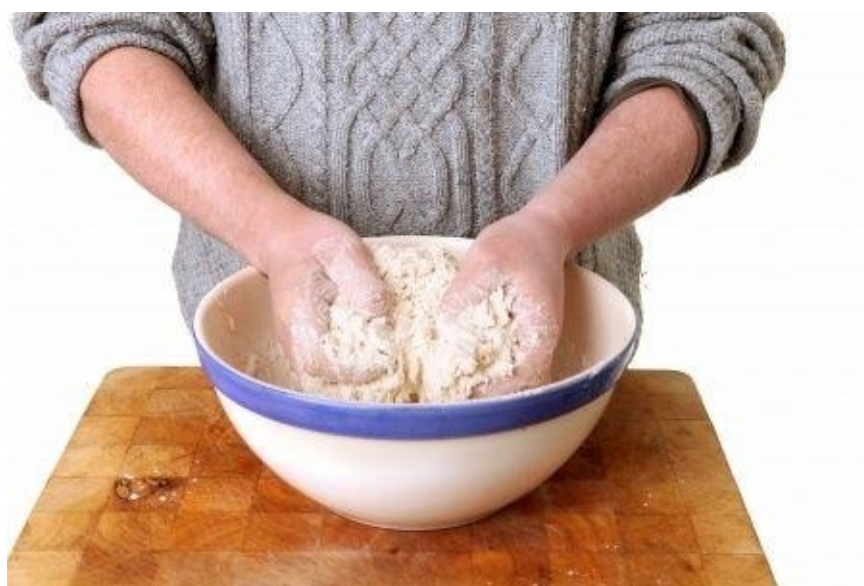
Cream together 1 ounce of fresh yeast with a teaspoonful of sugar and warm liquid until it is runny, and leave for 2 to 3 minutes. This is if you are using fresh yeast.

If you are using dried yeast, mix with a little warm liquid, leave until it is frothy – 10 minutes.



Add the yeast to the flour with the remaining liquid enough to give it a soft elastic consistency.

Start kneading the dough on a floured board by folding towards you, and pushing away with the heel of your hand.



You need to knead this for 10 minutes to get the exactly right strength and help the bread to rise.

If you are making this bread as a wafer accompaniment to be roasted on a griddle pan and then eaten with a liquid gravy, – as in the case of a chapati or a tortilla – you do not need to add yeast. All you have to do is make the dough, cover it with a wet cloth, and allow to

leaven for half an hour.

I remember seeing my grandmother knead this Dough for every meal, her own self, because this was one thing she did not leave to the cook. After it had been leavened for half an hour, she used to give it another “punching session” with the knuckles of her hand, and the heel of the Palm. And then when she had a firm soft dough, she used to add a little bit of butter on its surface, so that it remained soft, and no doughy crust was formed on top of the dough, before she used it to make fresh bread for her hungry brood.

How Do You Get the Right Flour Consistency?

Press the dough lightly with a floured finger. If an impression remains, it should be kneaded even more.

In Asia and in many parts of the East, it is family tradition to start teaching children how to knead bread dough in order to make their daily bread, when they are very young. So by the age of seven, they know how to knead bread and bake it in the ovens, or on griddle pans.

In fact, the epitome of a well-trained Eastern traditionally well brought up domesticated girl is considered to be that girl who can knead bread in a kneading utensil, in such a manner that not a piece of wet or dried flour is left sticking to its sides.

This kneading dough tradition was also the one followed by grandmas in the West until women started breaking away with tradition in the late 20th century and began to consider learning how to cook to be old-fashioned stuff. And now many of them spend lots of money going to cookery classes to learn what they could have learned at their grandmothers' knee, just decades ago.

Naturally, this activity when done, for the first time is going to be fraught with danger, because we do not know about putting the right amount of water in the flour.

So when my grandmother dragged me protesting into the kitchen and told me that she intended to teach me how to knead bread, naturally, I did not bother much about looking at her sprinkling the flour with water and moistening it just enough, kneading that portion and then sprinkling more water in the rest of the flour and kneading it, in its turn.

I just tilted the water jug and the end result was a glutinous starchy mass thick and sticky enough to glue wallpaper. This can happen and this will happen for first time over enthusiastic cooks, kneading dough.

So, just keep plenty of dry flour handy. If the kneaded dough is too sticky, add some dried flour. The only problem is that you are going to end up with so much kneaded dough, that you have to preserve it in the fridge, depending on how much flour you got wet and sticky in the very beginning!

Put the dough in a greased mixing bowl, cover with an oiled polythene or a damp cloth. Allow it to rise by placing it in a warm place like an airing cupboard for one and a half hours, or at an average room temperature for about two hours or even in the refrigerator for 8 to 10 hours. The technical term is "prove."

This proven bread is going to rise because of the gluten content in the wheat. You can consider this to have about the same fermenting qualities as does yeast.

So now your kneaded bread has risen to double its size and it is very soft. Knead it again.



Turn on to a board, and kneaded, until it reaches to its original bulk. You do not need any dry flour now during this process. Test again with your finger to see it is sufficiently kneaded.

Shaping the Dough



Divide the dough into three equal portions. Shape it into the shape you want.

To shape crunchy loaves, press 1 pound of dough into a large oblong, fold in three and put in greased, floured two pound tin. The crunchy upper crust is made by brushing the dough with an egg and sprinkling with cracked wheat or poppy seeds.

Put on a greased and floured baking tray. Cover loosely and leave to prove again until doubled in size. Then bake at 425°F for about 55 minutes.

It can take up to one hour and 20 minutes, depending on the temperature of the oven and the shape and the size of the bread.

Important Ingredients in Baking



The most important ingredients in baking are basic ingredients. All the extra items you add depend upon the recipe.

Flour – flour is milled from different types of wheat. Cake and pastry flour, milled from soft wheat is best for cakes and all-purpose flour, milled from hard wheat is used for bread.

Cookies, biscuits, pastry and muffins are usually made from either type, but you can make adjustments in the ingredients and amounts. Take a tip from the replacements given above.

Fats – this is going to include butter, lard, and cooking oils, as well as many other brands of commercial shortening. In olden days, our grandmothers used animal fat and lard. They also used butter. Some recipes call for a specific type or shortening. Others are going to allow you your own choice.

Some of these fats need refrigeration. Others may be kept at room temperature. For creaming, your fat should be at room temperature. If you are using it for kneading purposes with flour, or other dry ingredients, you should chill it until it is firm.

Sugar – unless specifically stated in the recipe, sugar means white sugar. These are fine granulated white sugar crystals, which are best for cakes. However, many recipes call for brown sugar, which is dark or light. Brown sugar stays moist and soft, if it is kept in a tightly closed plastic bag in a covered container.

Many baking recipes down the ages also use molasses, jaggery, and other sugar derivatives to make delicious baked dishes.

Baking Powder – unless stated otherwise, this is the single acting type. If you are using

the double acting baking powder, substitute $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon for each teaspoon called for in recipe.

Eggs – the size of the egg, depending on the recipe is also something you need to see. The normal egg size which you use in baking, is medium. Make sure that the eggs are at room temperature before you whip the egg whites. They are not going to beat stiffly if there is any fat present. That is why, when you are making mayonnaise, you are asked to add the fat slowly, for proper coagulation of the white. That is why cooks make sure that there is absolutely no egg yolk or any other fat, on the beater or the bowl, which is going to prevent the whites from reaching maximum volume.

Plastic bowls should not be used for beating egg whites.

Adjusting your oven – you need to adjust the racks, before heating the oven. Preheat the oven to reach the required temperatures, by the time the baking is ready for pouring and baking.

Do not place one pan directly above the other. Do not crowd the oven. Do not place the hands to near the walls of the oven or too close together. The heat must circulate freely on all sides of the pan, to result in even baking.

Understanding Pastry Quantities

The first time I read something like 8 ounce short crust pastry to be filled in, I was rather perplexed. Did that mean that the pastry crust was going to eight ounces? Actually, all pastry quantities are given in the terms of the amount of the flour that you are using.

So when you see an 8 ounce short crust pastry, it means that 8 ounces flour, 4 ounces of fat has been used. The frozen pastry packages you get in the market, say, 7 ½ ounces or 14 ounces. It means that 5 ounces of flour has been used, or nine – 10 ounces of flour has been used to make these pastry crusts.

Making Pastry

Keep everything ready at hand and cold. Cold hands work best when you are kneading pastry.

Sift the flour and the salt, unless the flour used is the super sifted type. Sifting the ingredients together incorporates air into the pastry and makes for light and tender pastry.

Use the fat straight from the fridge and got it into small cubes before adding to the flour. In this way it can be rubbed in quickly. The longer it takes to do this, the more overworked the ingredients become, causing shrinkage of the final pastry.

Using just your cold fingertips, rub the fat into the flour, lifting the hands well above the bowl to incorporate air and keep the fat cool. The mixture should resemble fine breadcrumbs. If the fat and flour are not correctly and evenly combined, the pastry will be tough.[\[2\]](#)

At the chilled water and lemon juice by sprinkling it over the flour, mixing and blending it quickly with a round bladed knife until the dough has massed together into large lumps.

Using your fingertips, press the dough together into a rough ball shape. You may need to sprinkle up to one teaspoonful more water over the loose mixture. Go through my dough kneading technique while making bread, so that you know of what I mean.



It should just hold together and be pliable but it should not be damp and sticky.

On a lightly floured working surface, knead the pastry lightly into a ball, then wrap it up into greaseproof or put it in a plastic bag. Put it to chill and “relax” in the fridge for at least half an hour before you use it.

Chilling the Dough – Yes or No; That Is the Question



The jury is still out on that one, because many people do not chill the dough before use, and they stick firmly to the idea that their grandmas did not do that, so why should they do that. However, sensible grandmas made sure that the dough was chilled, because this was to prevent the pastry from shrinking too much or cracking and breaking.

Here is the scientific explanation – when the pastry relaxes, the gluten in the flour becomes more pliable and elastic. While making bread, this is the same activity, which is done by the yeast on the flour. But we are not using yeast in pastry. So chilling the pastry before rolling gives it less shrinkage and a lighter texture.

Also, chill the flour before you roll it out. Rolling it out and then chilling it does not give the same light pastry result.

Rolling out Pastry



Again, before you roll out, make sure that all the items, including your hands are cold! Flour a surface lightly. Wooden boards are excellent because they are cool and so are marble boards, which we normally use to roll out our daily bread before we bake it in the Indian subcontinent and other parts of the East.[\[3\]](#)

Handle the pastry lightly. Heavy handling makes for heavy pastry. Always roll the pastry in one direction, moving it around frequently, but **do not** turn the pastry over.[\[4\]](#)

Avoid stretching the pastry during rolling out or it is going to shrink during cooking. Use a rolling pin to lift the pastry on to the pie or to the dish.

To cut the pastry after rolling, dust the knife or your cutter with flour to prevent tearing the dough.

Ready-Made Mix for Pancakes, Waffles, or Biscuits



Waffles for breakfast are a delicious way to start the day.

The ready-made mix that you buy off the supermarket shelves has these basic ingredients in it.

6 cups sifted pastry flour. If you are making your own, I would suggest wheat flour, because that is healthier – 3 tablespoons baking powder, 1 ½ teaspoon salt, 1 cup shortening.

Measure half of the sifted flour into the sifter. Add half of the baking powder and salt. Sift together into a large bowl.

Repeat with the remaining dry ingredients. Combine the two lots and sift again.

Cut the shortening in with two knives until the mixture resembles coarse meal. That is because the shortening has been frozen and the dry ingredients are sticking to these pea sized pieces of shortening. You can store this ready-made mix in a tightly covered container in a cold place. This is going to keep well for at least four weeks. If you are shortening, which does not require refrigeration is used, this makes may be stored in a cupboard.

Perfect Pies



It was a matter of pride for women to say that their daughters were expert in making the perfect pastry up to 50 years ago. Not many mothers can boast of the same thing today. But with grandma's tips and techniques, here are some ways in which your pastry can be a thing of joy and delight to everyone who tastes it.

Good pastry has to be tender and flaky, but not crumbly. The crust is crisp, golden brown around the edge, lighter brown on the bottom and the surface is blistered slightly.

Pastry Making Tips



Make sure that you use plain flour for best results. Self-raising flour is going to give you a spongier, cake texture and strong plain flour, which has more gluten is going to bake to a firm pastry.

The best fat mixture is of course going to be half margarine or butter and half lard or White fat. This is going to give you pastry, which is light, has a delicious flavor and texture.

Water – use chilled water! I learned this secret from a professional pastry cook. She took out water straight from the fridge. The amount of water is critical as the consistency of the pastry is all important. If the pastry is too wet, it is going to be difficult to handle and tough and hard when it is cooked. If it is too dry, the pastry is going to crack and cannot be rolled out properly.

It is impossible to give exact amounts and different flour absorbs different amounts of water, but as a general guide, use one teaspoonful of water to every one ounce of flour.

Try this tip – do not use water. Instead, use 1 teaspoon of lemon juice instead of one teaspoonful of water. The scientific explanation for better pastry with lemon juice means that the lemon juice has acted upon the gluten and made it more elastic. That is why the pastry rises better.

Ingredient Replacements

Grandma was quite adept at ingredient replacements, because she knew how to make do with what she had at hand. So here are these time-tested tips, which you can utilize right now. When you do not have the items given in the recipe, make do with these substitutes, which are equally effective replacements of what your recipe calls for.

1 cup pastry flour – remove 2 tablespoons from all-purpose flour making up 7/8 of a cup.

1 cup all-purpose flour – 1 cup +2 tablespoons pastry flour.

1 tablespoon cornstarch for thickening – 2 tablespoons ordinary flour.

1 ounce chocolate – one square – 3 tablespoons cocoa plus half a tablespoonful of fat or butter.

1 cup sour milk or buttermilk – 1 tablespoon vinegar plus milk to fill one cup. Allow it to stand for a few minutes.

Conclusion

This book introduces you to the world of different flours, which is one of the basic natural ingredients used by man to sustain life. The bread which you eat daily is made up of some sort of flour. So, when you pray to be given your daily bread every day, thank the man who discovered the main ingredient to make this bread – flour.

In many civilizations, it is considered that cereals and grains were given to mankind by the gods themselves and that is why they are considered to be sacred and holy. In prayers, water and grain was worshiped together with salt, since ancient times. In Eastern tradition, some prayers prayed to the God of grain, along with the God of water, and the God of fire, salt, and clarified butter are taken together to make a holy offering to the gods.

Even today, in many countries, you are going to be welcomed by your hosts with bread and salt. The idea is that our bread is yours, take it and eat of it. The salt which you eat is the honest earning of this house. So once you have taken a pinch of it, you cannot do anything treacherous and dishonorable to harm the people in this house. That is where the term of being true to one's salt came into existence.

In fact, people who remember Ali Baba and the 40 thieves and have read the original may remember that the slave Marjina became suspicious of the merchant who her master was entertaining as a guest. He was of course the chief of the thieves, disguised as a merchant and with homicidal thoughts about Ali Baba and his household.

This man refused to eat any salty dish saying that his doctor had prevented him from doing so. And the slave immediately decided that there was something rotten in the state of Denmark, and slaughtered all of the 40 thieves hidden in the empty casks wholesale with hot oil.

So now that you know about the value of flour in mythology, tradition, the social fabric of mankind, take full advantage of the knowledge given to you in this book.

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Author Bio

Dueep Jyot Singh is a Management and IT Professional who managed to gather Postgraduate qualifications in Management and English and Degrees in Science, French and Education while pursuing different enjoyable career options like being an hospital administrator, IT,SEO and HRD Database Manager/ trainer, movie , radio and TV scriptwriter, theatre artiste and public speaker, lecturer in French, Marketing and Advertising, ex-Editor of Hearts On Fire (now known as Solstice) Books Missouri USA, advice columnist and cartoonist, publisher and Aviation School trainer, ex- moderator on Medico.in, banker, student councilor ,travelogue writer ... among other things!

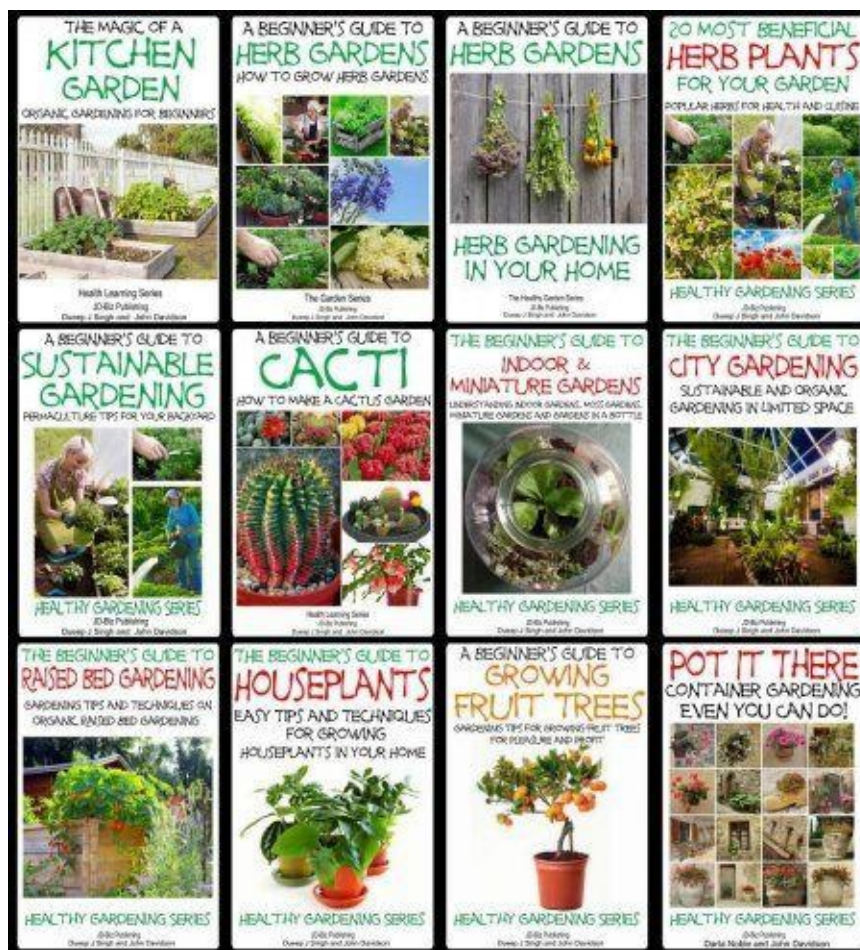
One fine morning, she decided that she had enough of killing herself by Degrees and went back to her first love — writing. It's more enjoyable! She already has 48 published academic and 14 fiction- in- different- genre books under her belt.

When she is not designing websites or making Graphic design illustrations for clients , she is browsing through old bookshops hunting for treasures, of which she has an enviable collection – including R.L. Stevenson, O.Henry, Dornford Yates, Maurice Walsh, De Maupassant, Victor Hugo, Sapper, C.N. Williamson, “Bartimeus” and the crown of her collection- Dickens “The Old Curiosity Shop,” and so on... Just call her “Renaissance Woman”) - collecting herbal remedies, acting like Universal Helping Hand/Agony Aunt, or escaping to her dear mountains for a bit of exploring, collecting herbs and plants and trekking.

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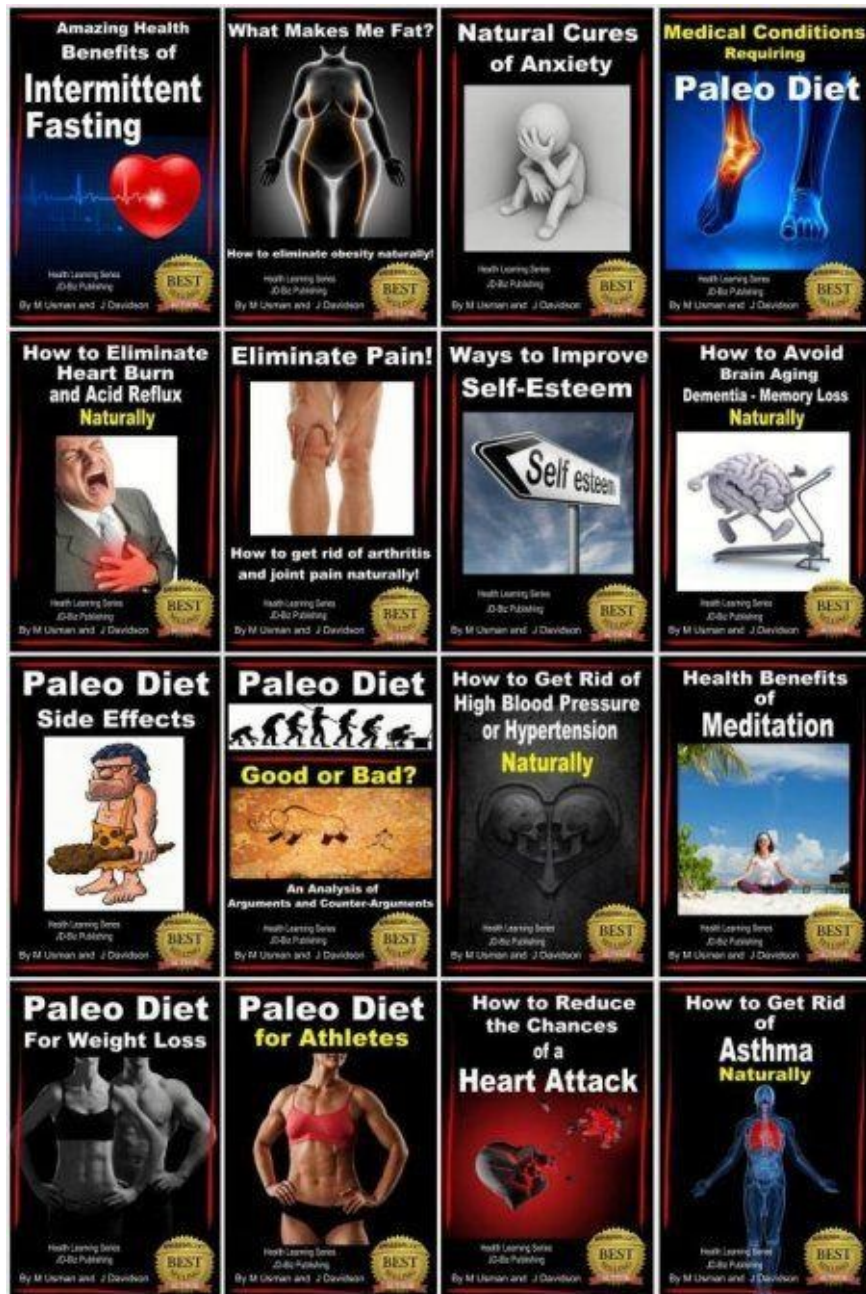


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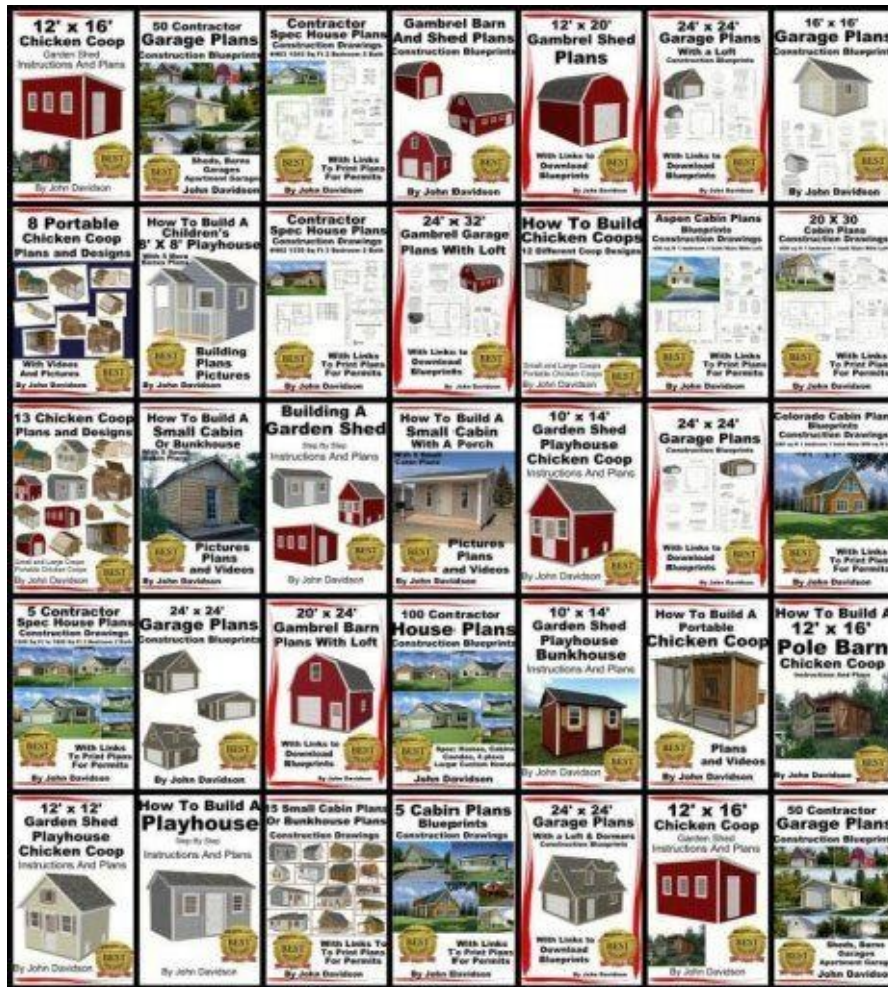
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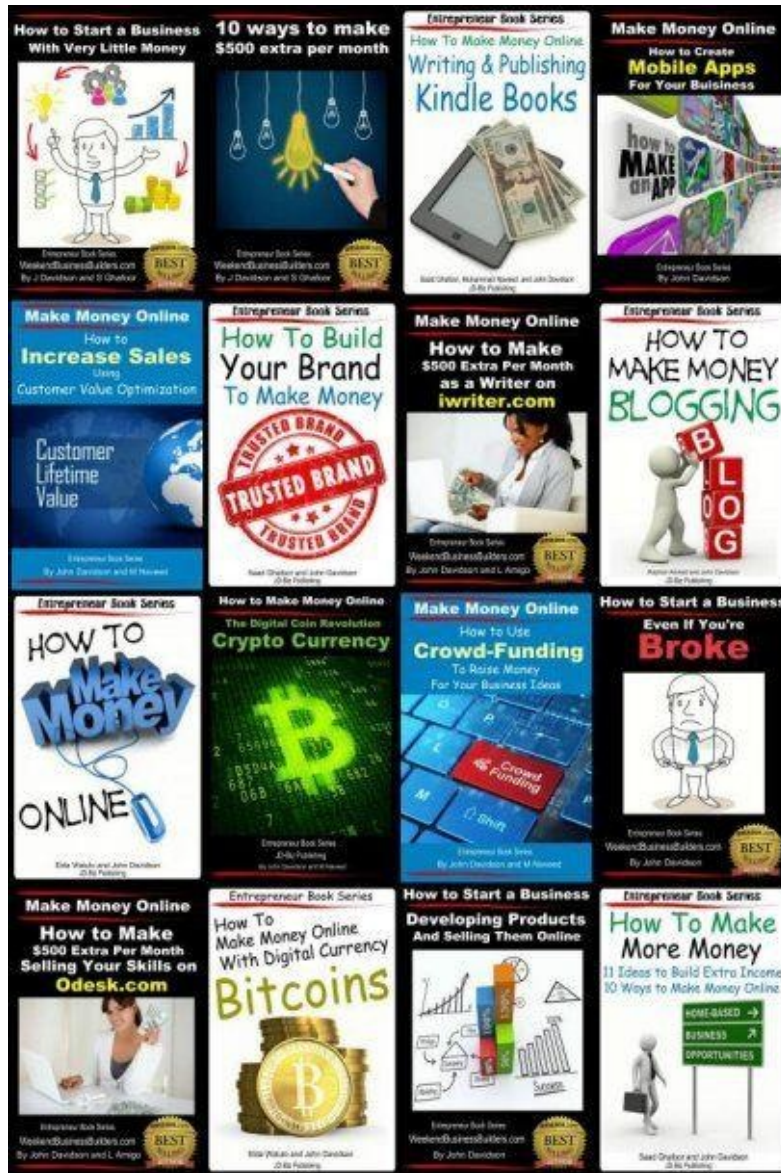
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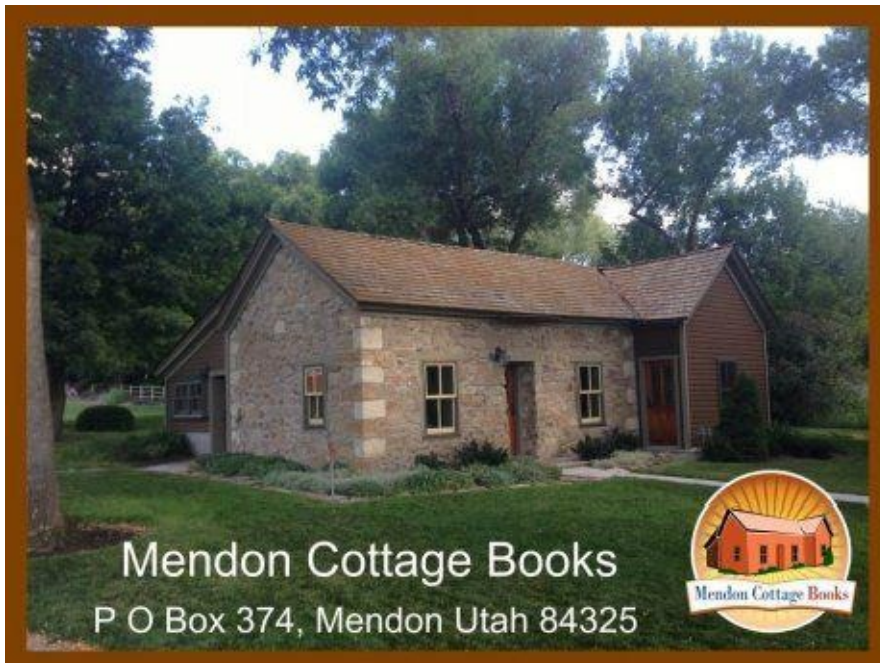


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[1] This tradition continued for the next 150 years, until an enterprising Dutch governor put a bounty of USD80 on every Native American head, brought to him. Naturally there was a whole scale massacre, until the Native Americans learned the barbaric and cruel European custom of scalping and also learned how to retaliate. And so 150 years of mutual respect and brotherhood was destroyed in a couple of years by a cruel custom of a civilized country. Surprising how the Native Americans are still being maligned as people taking scalps of innocent and gentle settlers in popular pulp fiction, which spread the concept of this savage barbarism practiced By the Noble Savage throughout the civilized world of Europe...

[2] Watch Helena Bonham Carter kneading her pastry in Sweeney Todd, while singing about the worst pies in London. She did not have enough of meat to put in her pies, because all the neighborhood cats had already been baked into pies, but her pastry kneading style was expert!

[3] This board made up of marble or wood is called a chakla and the rolling pin is called a belan. Those available on Amazon are exorbitantly priced. So I would suggest using your well-scrubbed kitchen counter surface for rolling out the pastry, and an ordinary rolling pin.

Here is my chakla secret – grandma’s traditional wooden chakla , which served her for more than 50 years and me for about 30 years more is packed away, safe and sound. I was just strolling in our hood, when I saw a huge square slab of marble thrown away by someone, who had just finished building his palatial monstrosity. So I picked up that slab, dragged it home and now I use it for slicing, dicing, chopping, rolling out pastry, bread, and whatever else needs to be done in the kitchen.

The only problem is lifting it up and washing it three times a day under the tap!

[4] That is definitely not how one rolls out bread in the East. Bread rolling means rolling out the dough with a rolling pin on a well-floured surface and turning it on both sides before rolling so that the bread shapes itself into a round circle. So I have to remember, no turning, when I make pastry.

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